



NEWSLETTER

for members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., ornithological society of the Carolinas

Volume 38

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Number 1

Simpson & Pratt Headline Spring Meeting

The Carolina Bird Club's always exciting spring meeting promises to be doubly thrilling this year as members will be given the opportunity to meet two remarkable individuals in the birding community.

Mark Simpson, author of *Birds of the Blue Ridge Mountains*, and **Doug Pratt**, the illustrator of the book, will be leading field trips on Saturday. In addition, Mark will be the featured speaker for the Saturday evening meeting.

A Statesville, NC native and a graduate of Davidson College, Mark is presently on the faculty of George Washington University. Autographed copies of his latest book will be available for purchase at the meeting with a percentage of the proceeds going to our club.

Also a graduate of Davidson College, Doug Pratt is a well known artist who presently lives in Baton Rouge, LA. A sampling of Doug's work, including the 22 illustrations from the book, will be on exhibit and for sale over the weekend.

This year's meeting will be in Boone, NC, May 8-10 at the Quality Inn Conference Center, 344 Blowing Rock Road (US 321). Registration for the meeting begins at 3:00 p.m. Friday in the Conference Center lobby. For early arrivals, we will offer two Friday field trips. Those interested should meet in the Quality Inn lobby at 1:00 p.m. Information for birding on your own will also be available at that time.

A wine and cheese reception will be held from 7-8 p.m. Friday evening in the hotel meeting room; at which time the art work of Doug Pratt will be on view. There will be a drink charge.

Following the social hour, our Friday night program will get underway with a short warbler workshop presented by Simon Thompson followed by a preview of field trips by Harry LeGrand.

Included in this year's outstanding field trips are visits to Roan and Grandfather Mountains. Lower elevation trips on the Parkway and along the New River should

be excellent for migrants. Also scheduled is a trip to the Nature Conservancy's prized Bluff Mountain tract with its unique fen, the only such marshland in the Southeast. Pre registration and a fee of \$10 are required for the Bluff Mountain trip. Please use the form provided.

The Saturday evening program will include the annual business meeting and election of officers prior to our guest speaker, Mark Simpson. The evening will conclude with the count down of birds seen on the day's field trips.

As you can see, this promises to be the most exciting spring meeting yet; so make your reservations early. The **deadline is April 8**. Rates are \$48 plus tax for single or double occupancy. Reservations may be made by mailing the form provided with deposit or by calling the Quality Inn at (704) 262-0020 for credit card guaranteed reservations. North Carolina residents *only* may call toll free at 1-800-362-2777. A 48 hour notice of cancellation is required.

Winter Meeting Sets Attendance Record

Good weather, advance publicity, and an excellent program attracted a record setting crowd to the Carolina Bird Club winter meeting in Mt. Pleasant, SC, January 31-February 2, 1992. The final registration of 211 recorded by **John & Libba Watson** and **Paula Wright** topped the previous record of 187 set in Morehead City, NC last winter. CBC president, **John Wright**, and Headquarters Secretary, **Tullie Johnson**, had collaborated on a news release which was mailed to newspapers in North and South Carolina. We know that it was carried

locally, and the highest representation was from the Charleston-Mt. Pleasant area with 24. Tennessee, Rhode Island and Ohio were represented along with large groups from Shelby, NC and the Brevard-Pisgah Forest, NC area.

For the first time field trips were available on Friday afternoon for early arrivals, and about 50 eager birders showed up. **Bob Woods** and **Peter Worthington** led groups to the Pitt Street Causeway and Fort Moultrie while **Dennis Forsythe** led a group to Folly Beach.

Friday night's program at the Wando High School began on a festive note with a lavish reception hosted by the Charleston Natural History Society. The goodies were prepared and served by **Dennis & Donna Forsythe** and **Ann Shahid** with the encouragement of Society president, "Mac" **MacMurphy**. The celebration continued with the presentation of a specially decorated cake to **Donna Forsyth** by CBC executive committee member-at-large for SC, **Lex Glover**, commemorating the adding of
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Winter Meeting

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the 300th species to her South Carolina list, a Wilson's Warbler at Huntington Beach State Park on January 26. Steve Compton then whetted our appetite for the Saturday field trips to close the evening.

The South Carolina low country was well covered Saturday in trips led by Steve Compton, Julian Harrison, Pete Laurie, Lex Glover, Dennis Forsythe, Perry Nugent, Nathan Dias, Ed Blich, Charlie Walters, Teddy Shuler, and Jim Beatty. Their efforts produced a total species count of 163 and one race (Ipswich Sparrow). A Sunday boat trip in the Cape Romain NWR led by Perry Nugent added two species (Piping Plover and Long-billed Curlew) for a total of 165.

Our worst fears that "there just don't seem to be as many warblers as there used to be" were confirmed by Dr. Sid Gauthreaux in a presentation of his research involving radar monitoring of the Gulf of Mexico during migration. The Clemson professor and former CBC president has analyzed data which confirms a 50% decline in trans-Gulf migrants between 1965-67 and 1987-89. He is now in the process of a detailed study of radar surveillance records at all eight Gulf Coast radar station for every spring day since 1957.



Perry Nugent helped his group get good looks at birds at Magnolia Gardens

Habitat destruction at both ends of the migratory range is the apparent culprit. Concern for neotropical migratory birds has resulted in the formation of Partners in Flight, the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Program. Part of their strategy is to monitor breeding birds in certain habitats to see if management practices to preserve habitats are working. Gauthreaux stated that there would be opportunity for birders to help. A

newsletter for this group, published in both English and Spanish, is available without charge by writing Peter Stangel, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, 18th & C St., NW, Rm. 2556, Washington, DC 20240.

Many thanks to Lex Glover and his many helpers for an outstanding winter meeting. Now, on to Daniel Boone country in the spring!

Chat to Resume Publication of Spring Counts by John S. Wright

Long-time members of the Carolina Bird Club will remember when Christmas Bird Counts and Spring Bird Counts were published in *The Chat*. Of course, most of our localities also submitted their Christmas Counts to the National Audubon Society for publication in *American Birds*. However, after 1977 only the Spring Counts were published in *The Chat*, and these too were deleted after 1981 because of tight budgets.

For the past decade several localities have continued to conduct Spring Bird Counts and submit their data to John Fussell who has continued to serve as the Spring Bird Count coordinator. However, without publication as an incentive, many localities no longer conduct and/or keep

accurate records of their Spring Bird Count data.

In consideration of our current financial health and the oft stated request that we resume Spring Bird Count publication, your Executive Committee in October of 1991 authorized the resumption of their publication, beginning with the counts taken in the spring of 1992.

Those of us who struggled with the proposition of whether the Spring Bird Counts were scientifically worth the effort (both in doing and in publishing) got our answer on Saturday night of the recent CBC winter meeting in Charleston. Dr. Sid Gauthreaux most clearly demonstrated the recent drastic declines of neotropical migrant birds, the very species we hope to

find on Spring Count day. His message, a sad and deeply disturbing one, does leave us with some clear choices. If we value the return of the migrants each spring, we must be willing to support those individuals and organizations who can make a difference. And each of us--novice and expert--can get involved in continuing or rejuvenating our local Spring Bird Count, an effort we can put to use in monitoring our bird populations.

John Fussell will soon be communicating with Christmas/Spring Bird Count compilers throughout the Carolinas with more specific information about the counts. I hope that you will make yourself available when your local compiler calls about the Spring Counts.

Volunteers Needed for 1992 Breeding Bird Survey

by Harry E. LeGrand Jr.

The Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), a continent-wide survey of the distribution, abundance, and population trends of breeding birds, is gearing up for the 1992 field season. In 1991, 36 of the 43 routes in North Carolina were run (or at least had route totals submitted). Six of the remaining seven routes had been spoken for, but no totals were ever received by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. I presume that most or all were not surveyed because of bad weather or other commitments. I am hoping that all of those routes run in 1991 will again be run by the same observers in order to provide the continuity needed to calculate species trends in populations.

I am looking for volunteers for the following seven routes. The numbers refer

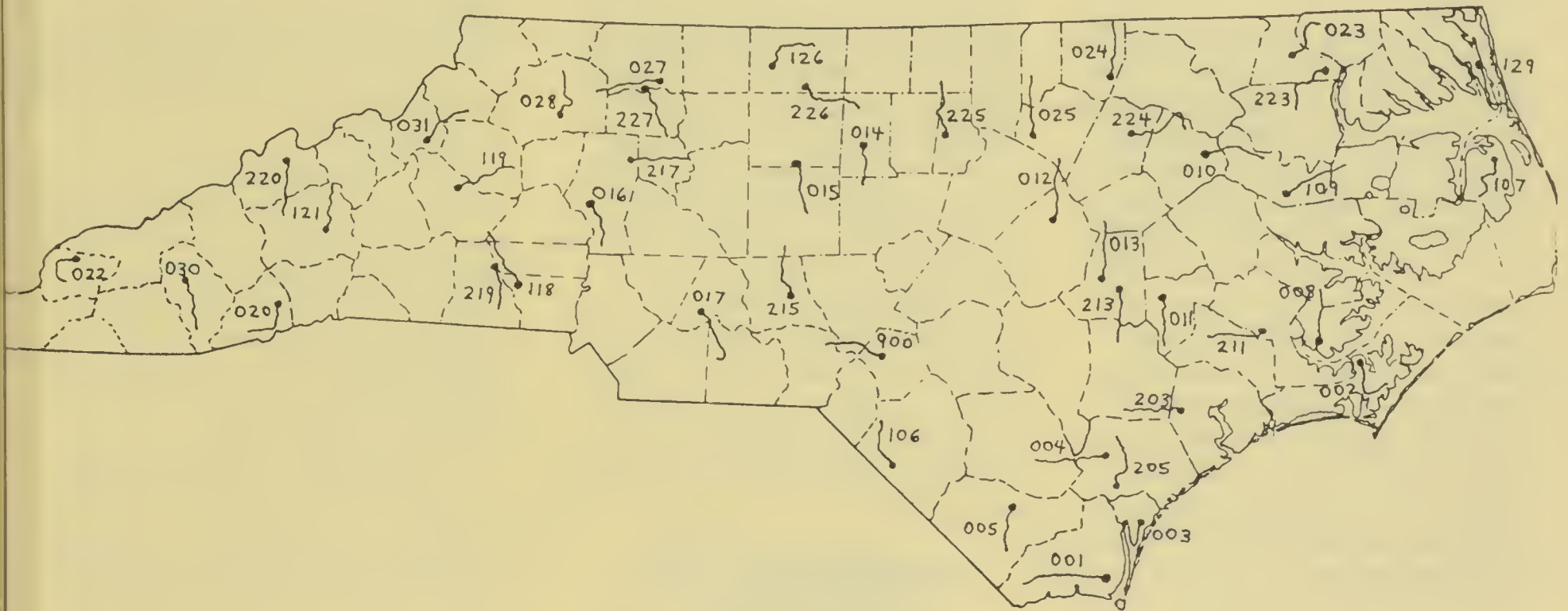
to the route numbers on the map. The dot on the map is the starting point of the 25 mile route.

003 Myrtle Grove
015 Climax
016 Mooresville
027 Copeland
129 Aydlott
203 Cypress Creek
205 Montague
217 Flay

Each BBS route is run on a single morning, generally between late May to mid June. Routes begin one half hour before sunrise and last about four hours; with the observer counting birds for three minutes at 50 stops at one half mile

intervals along the set route. Generally between 50 and 70 species are tallied per route. I will send new volunteers a copy of the 200 page report entitled *The Breeding Bird Survey: its First Fifteen Years, 1965-1979*.

I need to hear from you by approximately April 10. Let's get all 43 routes run this year. I want to be able to increase the number of routes for North Carolina, but I can't do this until we get 100% coverage of the existing routes. If you feel confident that you can identify all of the birds in your area *by song and call* and are interested in helping, please contact **Harry LeGrand, NC Natural Heritage Program, PO Box 27687, Raleigh, NC 27611. Telephone (919) 733-7701.**



Nominating Committee Report

Peter L. Worthington, Chairman of the CBC Nominating Committee, reports that the following slate of officers will be presented by the committee at the annual business meeting of the Carolina Bird Club on Saturday evening, May 9 at the Quality Inn Conference Center in Boone, NC. (I) indicates an incumbent eligible for reelection.

For a one year term:

President..John Wright (I)..Greenville, NC

Secretary..Len Pardue..Durham, NC
Treasurer..Robert Wood..Columbia, SC

For a two year term:

Member at Large, WNC..Pat Wilkinson
(I)..Shelby, NC
Member at Large, ENC..Ricky Davis (I)..
Rocky Mount, NC
Member at Large, SC..Lex Glover (I)..
Lugoff, SC

For a three year term:

Vice-President, WNC..Taylor Piephoff..
Charlotte, NC

In accordance with the CBC By-laws nominations may be made from the floor.

CBC Rare Bird Alert

(704) 332-BIRD

Backyard Birding

with Frances J. Nelson

Birding at our house was relatively lax in December. On the 13th a pair of Wood Ducks and a female Mallard visited the Mallard drake who's been coming and going since October. When the three newcomers left, the drake went too, and we haven't seen him since.

The woodies returned, though, on the 19th to swim a short while, but they moved on again. Two days later a pair of Hooded Mergansers landed on the pond--the first time I had ever seen a male up-close. He was almost as pretty as the male Wood Duck. We'd had females before, but...

Then, finally, on January 18th, the birds arrived. I suppose the cold weather (lows in the teens) triggered their little migrating mechanisms and they belatedly headed south. I had begun to think the folks at Project Feeder Watch would expel us from the program since we'd had so few birds.

I don't need to worry now, because the birds are here. Until mid-January, we'd had one delinquent goldfinch, a few juncos, and a couple of White-throated Sparrows and the regular cardinals, chickadees, and titmice. On the 18th we had ten goldfinches and twenty on the 20th. Since then they have increased to fifty or sixty, a number which keeps us busy filling feeders.

We also saw this winter's first Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and a Pine Warbler finally came to the suet. We had seen the warblers in the woods, but that was the first one we had seen in the yard since last winter. The cold also pushed the White-throated Sparrows and Purple Finches, but fewer than last year, and we didn't see our first Fox Sparrow in the yard until February. Perhaps the word got out that our resident Sharp-shinned Hawk had one for dinner last winter.

Speaking of the sharpie, he seems to have become a rare bird here. We have seen him occasionally this winter, but he hasn't perched his usual two hours on the deck at all. We haven't seen him in such a

long time now that we wonder if something had him for a meal or if he just matured and decided that hunting in someone's yard where a rather large dog chase him away was not his idea of happy hunting.

In early February, I did my usual early morning tip-toe to the front door and saw a Song Sparrow hopping along the deck railing. The Hooded Mergansers paid us another visit late that evening. They were still on the pond when darkness descended and we could no longer see them, but they were gone the next morning. And a Field Sparrow began showing up regularly at the platform feeder CJ got for Christmas.

On February 20th CJ was out of town, so I took Mocha for her bedtime walk (about 100 yards down the driveway and back). As I neared the turn around spot, I heard what sounded like several little birds twittering in the pine trees. When I directed the flashlight beam toward the trees, the noise stopped. I thought it a bit strange since it was 9 p.m., but I had no answer. I figured it must be something other than birds--my imagination or weird frogs. CJ was home the next evening for our dusk walk and he pointed out the "peent" of a woodcock. And, lo and behold, I heard the twittering again--part of the woodcock's flight display. I was so happy to identify my pine songsters of the night before that I wasn't even embarrassed for not thinking about woodcocks. Since then, we have listened to them almost every evening, but it is usually so near dark that we can't see them. The song is absolutely captivating and gives us something to look forward to on our walks.



Except for the woodcocks and a few ducks, our winter birding has been rather sparse, but, thank goodness, other members have shared some of their experiences. **Betty McIlwain** of Brevard, NC writes that Blue Jays love boiled egg yolks. She believes that "other species eat the yolks, but once the jays find them, nobody else gets a chance." She also puts out left-over cooked rice and egg shells, and in the spring, all species

take the shells.

Her biggest news was finding out that her butcher would grind suet for her, and "the birds seem to like it better." CJ and I grind our own, and it is a messy, greasy, disgusting job. Perhaps I, too, will let the butcher do it from now on.

My regular correspondent, **Dave Abraham**, from West Columbia, SC has not failed me this time. I received three letters from him. Perhaps he should write the column!?! His letters are delightful and usually contain photographs or drawings to enhance what he's talking about.

His first letter was eight wonderful pages. I wish I could just reprint the entire letter, but the editor told me that my space is limited this time. The Abrahams have noticed a lack of birds, too. Even the usual robins are absent (CJ and I have noticed an increase in robins this year).

They witnessed a hawk of some kind (Mr. A and I are still writing back and forth trying to decide between a Merlin and a sharpie) capture a titmouse and are feeling guilty about attracting the smaller birds to their yard. Now Mr. A is working on a small bird protector with which to cover his feeders.

The letter contained much more--stories about swifts residing in his chimney; with an idea about a chimney with a heat-proof false flue; his ongoing battle with a nuthatch, a downy woodpecker, and the nuthatch house, complete with sketches; and the removal of an opossum from his bug-light-turned-bird-feeder.

His second letter had two more ideas. First, he would like someone to design a set of cards of the warblers in all their confusing variations. Then, we wouldn't have to flip back and forth in Petersen's pages to figure out what we are seeing. Second, he has made a chickadee feeder out of a Roloids-type plastic bottle. He hasn't perfected that yet, so he's not marketing the feeder at this time.

His third letter brought news of Yellow-rumped Warblers at his doctored-up marvel meal. He adds nutmeats, raisins, fish and batter flakes, and the warblers love it. CJ and I have seen the little "butter bottoms" at our suet feeders, but never on the marvel meal. I guess we'll have to try some additions. However, I had better forget any more additions to this column, or the editor will fire me. Keep the letters coming *1006 Dogwood Hill Lane, Wake Forest, NC 27587.*

CBC Spring & Summer Field Trips

Bird Banding Demonstration

Leaders: Evelyn Dabbs & Lex Glover

Wednesday, April 29, 1992

Limit: 30 Participants **Cost:** \$5

Meet at 10:00 a.m. at Black River Swamp Banding Station at the home of Tommy and Evelyn Dabbs near Sumter, SC. Bring a lunch. Morning refreshments and hot and cold drinks will be provided.

This will be a "hands-on" experience for participants to band and release birds. It is an excellent way to study birds up close and in the hand. This is also a great opportunity to photograph birds.

Birds we expect to see include migrant and breeding warblers, thrushes, flycatchers, tanagers, sparrows and orioles,

as well as local resident species.

Directions: From Sumter head east on US 378 for twelve miles until you cross a series of three bridges. Get into left lane and turn left at the second median crossing after the third bridge into the lane by two mailboxes. Follow the lane about one mile to the only house in view.

Heading south on I-95 take Exit #135 and turn right on US 378. Go five miles to SC 527 and continue on US 378 for one mile beyond SC 527. Turn right into lane by two mailboxes and continue one mile to only house in view.

Heading north on I-95 take Exit # 132 and turn left on SC 527. Go four miles and turn left on US 378. Go for one mile and turn right into lane by two mailboxes. Continue one mile to only house in view.

Nearby accommodations are available at the Turbeville Comfort Inn (803) 659-8282 or Days Inn (803) 659-2175. Both are located at the intersection of I-95 and SC 378 (Exit # 135).

Registration: Contact Evelyn Dabbs at (803) 495-8220 to reserve space. Send registration form with fee to CBC headquarters.

Roanoke River, NC

Leaders: J. Merrill Lynch & Derb Carter

Saturday, June 6, 1992

Limit: 25 participants **Cost:** \$10

Meet at 6:30 a.m., June 6 at the Cracker Barrel Restaurant parking lot located at the intersection of I-95 and US 158 at Roanoke Rapids. Bring a picnic lunch and plenty of drinks.

We will carpool from here to several choice birding areas on private land in the Roanoke River floodplain about 30 minutes away. We will concentrate on the Roanoke River specialties: Cerulean Warbler, Swainson's Warbler, and Mississippi Kite. We will also have a chance to see many other breeding birds in this rich area such as Wild Turkey, Least Bittern, King Rail, Horned Lark,

Prothonotary Warbler, Northern Parula, Kentucky and Hooded Warblers, Orchard Oriole, Scarlet Tanager, and Grasshopper Sparrow. We may be doing some wading for marsh birds so bring old tennis shoes and pants you don't mind getting wet. Also be prepared for mosquitoes.

We may also have a chance to see the northernmost breeding population of American Anhinga in the eastern US among a colony of nesting Great Blue Herons. Common Moorhens are another possibility.

If there is sufficient interest, we may have time in the late afternoon to visit a

breeding colony of Henslow's Sparrows in Martin County near Williamston.

There are a number of lodging options in Roanoke Rapids. Several are located along US 158 in the vicinity of I-95. These include Hampton Inn 1-800-426-7866, Holiday Inn (919) 537-1031, Comfort Inn (919) 537-5252, and Days Inn (919) 536-4867.

Registration: Contact Merrill Lynch at (919) 387-8757 (home) or (919) 967-7007 (office) to reserve space. Send registration form with fee to CBC headquarters.

Savannah River Area, SC

Leader: Graham Dugas, Jr.

Saturday, June 13, 1992

Limit: 25 participants **Cost:** \$10

Meet at the Shoney's Restaurant in Hardeeville at 8:30 a.m. A variety of fast food places are available in Hardeeville for lunch. Bring something to drink, a hat and/or sunscreen, and insect repellent.

In the morning we will visit Webb Wildlife Center for Red-cockaded Woodpecker, Bachman's Sparrow, Wild Turkey, Blue Grosbeak, Indigo Bunting, warblers, etc. and B & C Boat Landing famous for Swallow-tailed and Mississippi Kites and soaring Wood Storks.

After lunch in Hardeeville we will visit Savannah Nation Wildlife Refuge for

Purple Gallinule, Least Bittern, waders, etc. and the Savannah River Spoil Site for Black-necked Stilt, waders, lingering shorebirds and waterfowl. There is a possibility of American Avocet and Mottled Duck.

Nearby accommodations are available in Hardeeville including Comfort Inn (803) 784-2188, Econo Lodge (803) 784-2201, and Holiday Inn (803) 784-2151.

Registration: Contact Graham Dugas, Jr. (803) 671-2008 to reserve space. Send registration form with fee to CBC headquarters.



Least
Bittern

Pelagic Trip

Leaders: Ricky Davis & Mike Tove

Meet at 5:30 a.m. at Pirate's Cove Marina on the Roanoke Island-Nags head causeway. Bring lunch and drinks.

As promised at the fall meeting in Nags Head, another CBC sponsored pelagic trip has been scheduled in 1992. Captain Allen Foreman's boat, the Country Girl, will take us offshore to the Gulf Stream and deep water for some good pelagic

birding. Expected birds include Black-capped Petrel, Cory's and Audubon's Shearwaters, Wilson's Storm-petrel, and Bridled Tern. Hoped for species include Greater Shearwater, Leach's and Band-rumped Storm-petrels, Pomarine Jaeger, and Sooty Tern. Hopefully the weather in July will be calm enough to assure the boat getting out this time!

Saturday, July 25, 1992
Limit: 22 participants **Cost:** \$80

Nearby accommodations are available in Manteo at the Duke of Dare Motor Lodge (919) 473-2175 and The Elizabethan Inn (919) 473-2101.

Registration: Contact Ricky Davis at (919) 443-0276 (evenings) to reserve space. Send registration form with fee to CBC headquarters. A full refund will be made if the boat doesn't go.

Early '92 Field Trips Well Received

NC Outer Banks Reported by John S. Wright

The CBC field trip to the NC Outer Banks and Pamlico Sound, January 11-12, was blessed with good weather and good birds. Despite a rather raw and windy start at the exposed tip of the Oregon Inlet jetty, the morning sun rose to reveal Purple Sandpiper feeding among the rocks. Later in the morning we viewed the usual excellent variety of waterfowl and waders at the Peal Island NWR. In addition we spotted Common Goldeneye and Peregrine Falcon.

During the afternoon we found Lesser Black-backed Gull at Cape Hatteras Point and White Pelican from the ferry which took us from Hatteras Island to Ocracoke Island.

Very early Sunday morning we boarded the ferry for the crossing of Pamlico Sound. With crystal clear skies we watched from the deck as the sun rose over the Atlantic. Our ferry crossing was also notable for the



many Surf and Black Scoters and numerous Oldsquaw--many being seen at close range as they sat on the water.

The highlight of our trip, Sandhill Crane (present since December), was seen near the little community of Nebraska. We finished our birding with good looks at several Bald Eagles around Mattamuskeet Lake NWR before topping off our "tanks" with some good down-home cooking and departing for home.

Our group, about 25 strong, had a great weekend. I hope we can do this again next year!

Townville, SC Reported by Bob Wood

Beautiful spring-like weather greeted 22 CBC birders in Townville, SC on February 29. We started the day with two White-Crowned Sparrows and a handful of Buffleheads in a pasture within sight of I-85. The next stop, at the ponds off McAdams Pond Road, tested our skills with poorly-plumaged Pectoral Sandpipers. We also picked up several Gadwalls and two American Black Ducks. The nearby fields produced outstanding

looks at Horned Larks. Farther down the road a pair of courting Red-tailed Hawks held our attention as they flew with their landing gear down.



Horned Grebes seemed to be everywhere as we ate lunch at Lake Hartwell, then a flock

of Scaup swimming a mile away attracted our attention. Five Redheads mixed in with them brought our field guides. Distinguishing Redheads from Canvasbacks at that distance was tough, and the call is still somewhat debatable. Birding activity dropped off considerably after lunch, but we still managed to find a pair of turkeys, a muskrat, and a painted turtle. A pair of Kingfishers put on a show for us at Eighteen Mile Creek, but the site otherwise wasn't up to its usual level of productivity.

Overall, we saw or hear 70 species, including nine duck, seven raptor, and five sandpiper species.

Townville will be outstanding in May and June, and we hope the winter trip has increased interest in birding the piedmont of western South Carolina. *Bob Wood*

Birds & Beacons

Eric G. Bolen is currently researching the history of birds colliding with lighthouses along the Atlantic Coast, with special reference to NC. First mention of such impacts (pun intended!) seems to be in Audubon's renowned work, and he hopes to acquire as much additional information on this subject as possible.

Correspondents supplying useful data (dates, location, species, weather, etc.) as well as anecdotal material will be appropriately acknowledged. Please contact Eric G. Bolen, c/o Graduate School, UNC-Wilmington, Wilmington, NC 28409.

Travel Opportunities

Does a Black Rail Weekend in April, a Lake Erie Migrant Trap Weekend in May, a Southeastern Arizona Fiesta in July and Belize in August spark your interest? Contact Dennis Forsythe, 1468 Battery Haig Ct., Charleston, SC 29409 tel. (803) 795-3996 (home) for complete information.

1991: My Big Year

by John S. Wright

In 1987 an unusually large number of very rare birds were found in North Carolina. Among these were Pacific Loon, Spotted Redshank, Northern Wheatear, Green Violet-ear and Smith's Longspur. Several North Carolina birders managed to see all or most of them, and partly because of their success with these rarities a competition developed that year to see who could lay claim to the record North Carolina year list--a year list being the total number of species of birds seen (or heard) in one calendar year. As this "big year" competition heated up, it became apparent that the final numbers would be large. At year's end, John Fussell and Derb Carter came out on top of the heap with year lists of 326 and 325 species respectively; pretty staggering numbers for one year of birding in North Carolina. These numbers represented about 80% of the total number of birds ever recorded in the state.

Trying to catch or surpass those 1987 record totals was not my goal when in late December of 1990 I announced to my birding friends that during the coming year of 1991 I was going to keep a North Carolina year list. "Oh, you mean a *big year*," John Fussell said. I tried to explain that all I was going to do was to keep a diary of my bird sightings during the year so that I could have an accurate record of my birding year. I explained that I was only going to do this for fun, and that I was not trying to do a "big year." However, I don't think that he was fooled. Anyway, I purchased a small notebook for the purpose and was all ready to start my year list diary when the new year began.

My first entry was for January 1st. The Greenville Christmas Count kept me out all day, and I tallied my first 71 species. My first "good" bird, a Short-eared Owl (#73), came on January 5th. A trip to the Outer Banks and the Lake Phelps area on January 19th and 20th with my wife Paula, Harry LeGrand and Ricky Davis boosted my total to nearly 150 species, and changed my outlook on the year list. The year had just begun and I had already seen Short-eared and Barn Owls, White Pelican, Harlequin Duck, Iceland Gull, Lincoln's, Clay-colored and Vesper

Sparrows. I was on a roll and I was psyched up. I remained in that condition for the remainder of the year. On February 9th the first really great bird graced my list. This was a Long-eared Owl (#161), the result of a call from the finder, Derb Carter. My winter birding ended with Red Phalarope (#171), seen from the headboat Carolina Princess on March 16th. I had experienced a pretty good winter and hadn't worked too hard to get the birds.

I knew that I would need to have a busy and productive spring if I wanted to entertain any hopes of reaching 300 species by year's end. I birded frequently around my home county all through late March and early April. Milestone bird #200, Orchard Oriole, came on April 15th. My next great bird (#210) was an Harris' Sparrow, thanks to another call from Derb Carter. Paula and I saw this one on the way to the Greenville, SC spring meeting of the Carolina Bird Club. Of course, we birded the North Carolina mountains hard on Friday morning before crossing the state line, and had run the list up to 226 species. Likewise, we birded on the way back home too, taking a rather circuitous route around Mount Mitchell, and stopping by the Yadkin River bridge to find nesting Cliff Swallows (#232).

May was pure excitement. My list was growing, and I was enthusiastic about preparations for a North Carolina "big day" which I was to do with Derb Carter and Merrill Lynch by car *and* airplane from the mountains to the coast on May 19th. Some preliminary scouting on the coast yielded Roseate Tern (#248) and in the mountains an Alder Flycatcher (#258). However, the "big day" ended up as a big bust. The entire state was awash with rain so that flying to the coast was impossible. But, I was happy to have been a part of the effort, and to return home with 260 species on my year list. May 25th found me aboard the headboat Carolina Princess again. My trip netted Band-rumped Storm Petrel, Long-tailed Jaeger and White-tailed Tropicbird (#268) on a day when the ocean was alive with migrating pelagic birds.

The month of June was rather

uneventful even though I birded regularly. By the end of the month my list stood at 275 species, but I was missing several breeding season birds which I would need to find in July.

On July 7th Paula and I started out for the mountains, but we stopped in Raleigh to say hello to Harry LeGrand. Our travel plans changed when he told us of a Ruff in Wilmington. The Ruff became #276 and was quite a thrill. Back to the mountains a day late, we looked hard and finally found Black-billed Cuckoo, saw Black-capped Chickadee at Clingman's Dome, and as a great bonus we not only heard but also saw a Saw-whet Owl (#280) along the Blue Ridge Parkway. Coming back from the mountains we made one of two July trips to the extreme southeastern coast. These trips yielded Wood Stork, Reddish Egret and Purple Gallinule (#287). By the end of July some good shorebirds (Baird's Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpiper) and a few pelagic birds had pushed my total to 293 species. August, however, proved to be a barren month; bringing only Sooty Tern and Wilson's Phalarope (#295).

By the end of August I knew that I could at least reach and surpass the 300 species plateau. The only question was whether I could make a serious run at the 326 species which John Fussell had posted four years earlier. At the time I didn't think it would be possible.

Early September was a boost. I saw Buff-breasted Sandpiper and Yellow-headed Blackbird on the 2nd of the month, and thanks to a call from Eric Dean I had Eared Grebe (#298) on the 4th. A much delayed Greater Shearwater came on a September pelagic trip, and the 300th bird of the year, Lesser Golden Plover, was seen on the 10th, thanks to yet another call from Eric Dean. Halfway through the month Paula and I again went to the mountains, needing several "confusing fall warblers." We were successful, seeing Nashville Warbler and Philadelphia Vireo among others, and an unexpected Wild Turkey (#304). I was hoping to build my list during the CBC fall meeting at Nags Head and was not disappointed. Wilson's

(continued next page)

Big Year

(continued from previous page)

Warbler, Western Kingbird, Lark Sparrow and Eurasian Wigeon (#312) were enough to ease my disappointment at not seeing Eloise Potter's Kirtland's Warbler.

October and the first half of November were a long dry spell. Only on species, Dickcissel, was added during this month and a half, and I began to feel that my luck had run out. Virtually all the "easy" birds were already on my list, and the remaining possibilities were tough. However, I became rejuvenated on November 16th on an Outer Banks trip with Harry LeGrand as a fly-by Pine Siskin and King Eider were followed by Ross' Goose (#316) at Pea Island Refuge. The following day I was a participant on Harry's CBC field trip to Mattamuskeet Lake and surrounding areas, and before that day was over, a barely-audible Lapland Longspur became #317. The rest of November was hard birding. I took the headboat Continental Shelf out of Morehead City on the 23rd hoping for miracles, but I got a Black-legged Kittiwake (#318). For the Thanksgiving holiday I wanted no turkey (which I'd already seen); I wanted year birds. Paula and I celebrated the holiday with Common Eider on the 28th and with John Fussell saw Brewer's Blackbird (#320) on the 29th.

The month of December remained and all the birds now were going to be hard to find. I faced the real possibility of striking out with a full month left, but I also knew that with some luck there was the possibility of breaking the record. On the 7th Paula and I raced eastward after a phone tip to find LeConte's Sparrow (#321) near Edenton. The following day I raced westward to follow up on a CBC Rare Bird Alert call and found Rufous Hummingbird (#322) in Charlotte. Then the Christmas Counts began. My last best chances to add rarities would lie in those two weeks. I was scheduled to go on eight counts, mainly in the coastal areas.

December 14: Goldsboro Count. Nothing new. December 15: Morehead City Count. Having learned of a Snow Bunting on Bird Shoal I risked the crossing of Taylor's Creek by kayak and surf board, and Snow Bunting (#323) was mine. December 22: Greenville Count. I took my flu out into the field and managed to survive the day. December 26:

Pamlico Sound Count. From the ferry we counted birds. Cold and disappointing. Nothing new. December 27: Hatteras Count. Lots of rain. Just after commenting to Ricky Davis about being frustrated in several attempts to find a Common Merganser, guess what? Common Merganser (#324)! A few hours later a report of Thayer's Gull had me four-wheeling through sand again at Cape Hatteras Point. Thayer's Gull was a great bird and made #325. December 28: Bodie-Pea Island Count. The Razorbill was a great bird, but I didn't see it. Oh well. December 29: Mattamuskeet Count. The rain stopped in early morning. Lots of birds but nothing new until the news was spilled at the compilation dinner (after dark). In addition to a Ruff seen by Ricky Davis and Bob Lewis, Harry LeGrand had seen a Sandhill Crane.

I slept fitfully that night, having an Indiana Jones-type dream about the Sandhill Crane in which things went from bad to worse. I awoke early on the 30th and with two others went out early to locate the crane. By 8:00 a.m. we had seen it. I felt much relief at having tied the record of 326 species, and with another day remaining there was hope for even more. I drove home to Greenville, bathed, shaved and rested up for the last day of the year.

Paula and I had planned to spend the last day driving the beach from Corolla to the Virginia line, looking for alcids, Little Gull, etc. All that changed when the call came from Henry Link telling of a Red-necked Grebe at Jordan Lake and a probable Pine Grosbeak at High Point.

At 4:00 a.m. on December 31st Paula and I hauled out of bed and took off for Jordan Lake. Before sunrise we were at Ebenezer Point, waiting for enough light to see a grebe. Unfortunately, Jordan Lake is big and there were several grebes. Fortunately, a half hour of scanning finally proved successful. We saw Red-necked Grebe (#327) and were off to High Point. We arrived about 9:00 a.m. and spent the next three hours waiting, along with Henry Link, Herb Hendrickson and others for the Pine Grosbeak to come back to the feeder. No grosbeak. My luck had finally run out, but not before the setting of a new record for the greatest number of species of birds seen in one calendar year in North Carolina. The year 1991 had

indeed been a very big year for me. It was a most hectic, challenging and thoroughly enjoyable year of birding.

Hummingbird Q & A

by Dottie Foy

Does the water need to be colored red to attract hummingbirds?

...Raleigh, NC

NO! Hummingbirds will come to a hummer feeder regardless of the color of the water in it. In 1983 I did an experiment using five feeders with different water in each one. One had green colored water; one had blue colored water; one had yellow colored water; one had clear water; and one had red colored water. The hummers fed from all feeders; they had no favorite. There was a time several years ago when this country was buying our red dye from China. This was used for our red/maroon bathroom fixtures and many other things including food coloring. This was very harmful to humans and birds alike, and somewhere along the line the U.S. government stepped in and banned the importation of this red coloring. We began making our own red dye and what has been on the market now for several years is safe for humans and *birds*. Therefore, there is no truth to the statement that red food dye will injure hummingbirds. As a matter of fact, too much sugar in the sugar water will do more harm than the old China dye ever did. But that's a question for another issue of the Newsletter.

Should all feeders have perches?

...Wilmington, NC

No. The birds will use either a feeder with or without perches. I would suggest however, that anyone who is serious about studying the "gems of the bird world" get a feeder with perches. The birds are far easier to see and study when they are perched while sipping their food.

Send your hummingbird questions to Mrs. Dorothy J. Foy, PO Box 457, Oriental, NC 28571

Registration Form
CBC Spring & Summer Field Trips

Name(s) _____

(list each participant)

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____ for the following field trips: _____ Bird banding demonstration, April 29 (\$5); _____ Roanoke River, June 6 (\$10); _____ Savannah River, June 13 (\$10) _____ Pelagic trip, July 25 (\$80). I have called the appropriate trip leader to ensure that space is available.

Mail with check to **Carolina Bird Club, Inc.**, PO Box 27647, Raleigh, NC 27611

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Quality Inn Reservation Form

Carolina Bird Club
Spring Meeting, May 8-10, 1992

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Rooms (single or double occupancy) \$48.00 plus tax.

Please reserve _____ room(s) at \$48.00 per night. My check for the first night's lodging is enclosed. I will arrive _____ and depart _____.

Mail with deposit to **Quality Inn Conference Center**, 344 Blowing Rock Rd., Boone, NC 28607 or call (704) 262-0020 (in NC call toll free 1-800-362-2777)

.....

Bluff Mountain Reservation Form

Saturday, May 9, 1992

Name(s) _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____ to reserve _____ place(s) at \$10 each for the CBC spring meeting field trip to Bluff Mountain.

Please make check payable to **The Nature Conservancy** and mail to Dr. Jay Frank Randle, 116 Blanwood Drive, Boone, NC 28607.

.....

Registration Form
CBC Spring Meeting, May 8-10, 1992

Name(s) _____

(list each name for name tags)

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Enclosed is my check in the amount of \$ _____ for _____ member registrations at \$4 each and _____ nonmember registrations at \$5 each. Registration at meeting will be \$5 for members and \$6 for nonmembers.

Mail with check to **Carolina Bird Club, Inc.**, PO Box 27647, Raleigh, NC 27611

Welcome New Members

Gerald & Barbara
Ackerman
New Bern, NC

Greg All
Ridgeville, SC

Ann Anderson
Lumberton, NC

Patricia M. Archer
Shelby, NC

Ernie Ayers
Mt. Pleasant, SC

Lynn Barber
Raleigh, NC

John J. Bean
Mt. Pleasant, SC

Harrol & Velma Blevins
Sumter, SC

M/M Edwin Blitch
Charleston, SC

Allen Boynton
Morganton, NC

Jerry & Donna Brown
Emerald Isle, NC

Bob & Cathy Corey
Southern Pines, NC

Peter & Marion Cotton
Durham, NC

George Crumley
Charleston, SC

M/M Mort Curry, Jr.
N. Kingstown, RI

Nathan W. Dias
Charleston, SC

Faith Dietrick
Beulaville, NC

David Donmoyer
Hemingway, SC

Hilda B. Fountain
High Point, NC

Sue Glasby
Lillington, NC

Dan Goldstein family
Folly Beach, SC

Frank L. Greene
Greenville, SC

Richard F. Harrington
Mt. Pleasant, SC

Teri J. Hatcher
Charlotte, NC

William B. Hofmann
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Brenda Hull & Bill
Henninger
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Joanne D. Hutto
Lexington, SC

Barbara B. Kendrick
Winston-Salem, NC

Jeff Kline family
Charleston, SC

Jane M. Lamarche
Southern Pines, NC

Jansen B. Lasley
Greensboro, NC

Thomas G. Ledford
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David W. Lupton
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Roger D. McNeill family
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Steve & Jill Patterson
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Theresa A. Roberts
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Ben C. Smith
Mt. Pleasant, SC

Tonya Spires
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Russell Thompson
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Michael Blaine Tronoski
Charleston, SC

Roy Turner
Rock Hill, SC

Charles E. Walters
Charleston, SC

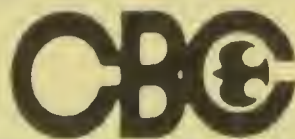
James Ward
Oriental, NC

Jane West
Charleston, SC

Wild Bird World
New Bern, NC

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